November 2016

To Friends of Cornell Cooperative Extension:

Welcome to Cornell Cooperative Extension. We invite you to participate and benefit from the many programs and services created to meet the broad interests and needs of Schoharie and Otsego County residents. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schoharie and Otsego Counties (CCE) serves residents through its mission of delivering informal educational programs by utilizing a unique partnership of faculty and researchers at Cornell University—New York State’s land grant university—with committed county-based staff who drive the value and impact for residents.

CCE provides educational and technical resources in three important program areas. Here is a glimpse, but read more in the following pages.

Agriculture and Horticulture: Local educators provide information on agricultural and horticultural production, marketing, and enterprise development for farmers and producers. Soil nutrient analysis and disease and insect identification and control measures are offered. Information needs of home gardeners are handled by trained Master Gardener Volunteers who extend the capabilities of the organization. The association also retains the expertise of two program teams. The Central New York Dairy and Field Crop team provides know-how for dairy, row crop, and forage farmers and producers. Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program educators deliver technical information on business management; tree, shrub, and vine fruit production; vegetable production; and value added foods.

4-H Youth Development: Children and youth have access to unique programs in three mission areas—public presentations, healthy lifestyles, and STEM education. 4-H engages youth and adults through 4-H community clubs, independent memberships, and special interest projects and events. Adult volunteers are the cornerstone in the delivery of programs, from animal showmanship, animal and non-animal youth projects, public speaking and leadership, healthy lifestyles, to career exploration on the Cornell campus being a few. Lastly, the After-School Program continues to serve children and parents at two Schoharie County schools.

Family and Consumer Sciences: Delivered through the association for families with children, the outreach program is directed by Cornell University as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP for families in Schoharie, Otsego, and Montgomery Counties. Lastly, two special grant-funded projects were undertaken in 2016. An Empire State Development Agency sponsored assessment of the Mohawk Valley regional food system was followed with business-level examinations of three enterprise models which could be located at Gilford Mills or similar facility. A food aggregation hub, a protein (meat) processing facility, and a small grains clearing house were examined. Enterprise business models were developed which lay the ground for further investigation. Also, NYS Department of Ag and Markets awarded a Farm to School grant to the association for fostering farm to institution business development and for engaging school parents in how local foods can provide options at school sites.

Please enjoy our report. This brief Annual Association Report shares a glimpse of work through narrative and photographs of our staff, leaders, and volunteers during 2016. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Don Smyers
Association Executive Director
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schoharie and Otsego Counties
Members, volunteers, and 4-H Staff in Schoharie County made every effort to provide program opportunities to empower youth and adults to build life skills through hands-on learning during the past year. The 4-H Mission Mandates of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM), Healthy Lifestyles and Citizenship retain their prominent place in club offerings.

Youth participation in 4-H activities took numerous forms including traditional clubs, special interest groups, camps, fairs, 4-H Afterschool programs at Schoharie and Cobleskill-Richmondville Central Schools, and a variety of other events.

- Public Presentations by 4-H members grew 26% from 2015 in the county, with six more youth joining the event.
- The number of youth participating in the Earn-An-Animal program grew 16%. Youth received hens, a meat goat, rabbits, and swine courtesy of several generous donors.
- The Tractor Safety Program, held cooperatively with SUNY Cobleskill’s Agriculture Engineering Department, returned in the spring with six participants.
- Ten Schoharie County 4-H members took advantage of Price Chopper’s Vegetable Marketing program to sell their home grown produce to eager consumers.
- Schoharie County Youth Bureau and 4-H jointly offered April Adventures during the annual spring break this year. Activities included trips to Albany’s Pine Bush and a tour of Proctor’s Theater among several others.
- 4-H Staff partnered with Schoharie and Middleburgh Libraries in support of the New York State Summer Reading Program to present a program based on the theme “On Your Mark, Get Set... Read! Keep a Body Busy with 4-H!” Nearly twenty-five parents and children attended the events.
- The fair season was a high point for everyone involved with 4-H. Members entered food, crafts, plants, animals, fruits, and vegetables for judging and exhibition at the Schoharie County Sunshine Fair and the Great New York State Fair. Gabe Wood, a member of Happy Hoofsters 4-H Club, received a “Photography Special Recognition for Outstanding Exhibits” ribbon for his outstanding entry at the New York State Fair. In addition to the various livestock shows, popular activities for youth included Dairy Challenge, Dairy Judging, Horse Bowl, and Hippology.
- The Schoharie County 4-H Legislative Intern Program continued its three decade long tradition of providing Schoharie County High Schools’ upperclassmen an opportunity to learn about local government. Interns met with county officials, department heads and visited government offices during the seven month program. A trip to the New York State Capital in Albany, along with meeting with State Senator James Seward, concluded the year’s activities.
Special Honors for Schoharie 4-H

- Claire Williams was selected to represent New York at the Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup in Louisville, Kentucky, in November.
- Shannon Sears represented New York at the National 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Contest at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin in October.

Schoharie County 4-H member Claire Williams was recognized nationally at Eastern National 4-H Roundup in Louisville, Kentucky.

Schoharie County 4-H member Shannon Sears was recognized nationally at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin.

4-H Youth Development Otsego County reported by Patti Zellmer, 4-H Program Leader

The 4-H Youth Development Program is the youth outreach program of the land-grant universities’ Cooperative Extension Services and the United States Department of Agriculture. 4-H National Headquarters at USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture provides leadership in positive youth development in the areas of citizenship, healthy living, and science.

Cornell is our land-grant university. In New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension delivers the 4-H Program to 57 counties and New York City. 4-H provides the experiences with life skills that youth need like confidence, responsibility, independence, and compassion. The Otsego County 4-H Program is growing true leaders.

Project participation

363 Animal Science
102 Consumer & Family Science
96 Environmental Science
171 Technology & Engineering
78 Public Presentations

County Fair participation 170 4-H Exhibitors

4-H Entries

1252 Animal Science
675 Martin Hall

Rainbow Warriors 4-H Club, Unadilla

County Fair Beef Showmen
McKenna Sellick and Tyler Butler
The Otsego County Fair gives 4-H members the opportunity to show their 4-H exhibits. This year there were a record number of 675 entries in Martin Hall. The exhibits were as diverse as the 4-H members; a special photo process of an Ambrotype Tree, a wooden puzzle table, a potato cannon, a horse shoe end table, and fairy gardens just to name a few. The traditional cooking, sewing, gardening, crafts, and photography entries were also on exhibit. Many of the 124 4-H animal exhibitors worked together on Monday to provide safety animals in flood conditions.

Preparing an exhibit of any kind requires important life skills, such as organizing, thinking critically, setting goals, managing time, and communicating. Evaluation of each exhibit provides time for learning and celebration. Otsego County 4-H members, “Learn by Doing” and “Make the Best Better” when they participate at the county fair.

4-H Theater Guild
4-H does theater? Yes! One of the new 4-H Clubs is The Hartwick 4-H Theater Guild. During show season they meet at the Hartwick Community Center to practice and perform. “It’s a Wonderful Life,” radio theater, and “Law & Order: Fairy Tale Unit,” were the two full length productions completed this year.

Besides on stage presence, youth are learning about sound, lighting, marketing, and working together so the “show will go on.”

Leadership
This year National 4-H launched the Grow True Leaders Campaign. In 4-H, we believe in the power of young people. One of the functions of the Otsego County 4-H Program is to give youth hands-on experiences so they grow into true leaders. A few examples are officer training, youth learn how to lead a meeting; 4-H Lego Robotics Summer Camp, 4-H alums (RoboKronos) teach middle school campers; State Fair Teen Team, 4-H teens engage fair goers of all ages in hands-on learning about alternative energy, GIS/GPS, building paper helicopters, gliders, and creating with water colors. 4-H alums have been accepted and excelled in college level leadership positions.

Special thanks are given to the 141 registered 4-H volunteers that are the heart of 4-H in Otsego County!

4-H is Growing in Otsego County to create a world in which youth and adults learn, grow, and work together as catalysts for positive change!
2016 Photo Highlights of 4-H Member Activities
The parentally funded program offers a unique combination of fun and learning to over one hundred participants in grades K-8 at Schoharie and Cobleskill-Richmondville Central Schools during the past year. Under the licensure of New York State’s Office of Children and Family Services and administered by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schoharie and Otsego Counties, students and their families are assured of a safe and professionally well-regarded educational program.

With its foundation in 4-H traditions, trained staff offered many opportunities for “hands on learning” on topics of interest to the youth in clubs in each school such as Legos and crafts, community service, environmental science and Native American culture. In addition, children can receive homework help to support their academic success.

Afterschool programs help fill the growing need for quality child care after the school day that helps youth learn leadership skills, teamwork and critical thinking skills necessary for future achievement. Research has shown that “latchkey kids” are at a higher likelihood to become involved in crime and drop out of school. A key indicator of the program’s positive impact is seen in the return of several former students who have become paid 4-H interns at both schools!

Afterschool Program Coordinator Susan Salisbury reads “Arnie and the New Kid” by Nancy Carlson at Middleburgh and Schoharie Free Library as part of a collaboration between the libraries, 4-H, 4-H Afterschool and the New York State Summer
During 2016 CCE collaborated with county agencies, statewide agencies, other Extension offices, and Cornell University, enabling the Agriculture and Horticulture programs to offer diverse learning experiences to the commercial farming community, the public at large, and home gardeners throughout the year.

Annie’s Project (AP), Year 6 – Bringing Farm Transition Planning to Women in Agriculture in New York: In collaboration with Bonnie Collins (CCE Oneida County), CCE completed a $47K grant from the NE Center for Risk Management Education (NERME) that trained twenty-five ag service providers statewide to facilitate the curriculum, Managing for Today and Tomorrow (MTT) at respective host sites between fall 2015 and summer 2016. Approximately 90% of projected audience of farm women participated (68/75). Locally, David facilitated a pilot MTT to seven participants in spring 2015, and a second MTT to three participants in spring 2016. Our New York Annie’s Project team also presented at the 2016 ERME Conference Poster Session in Fort Worth.

The current focus is to develop a core online resource for ‘NY Women in Agriculture’ for both constituents and CCE educators to utilize for Annie’s Project “Classic” – Risk Management Education for Women in Farming as well as Transition Planning (MTT), and other pertinent programming. Additionally, we encourage the development of local focus groups composed of women in agriculture and topic professionals and presenters to enhance programming.

Family Farm Day (FFD) – In its fourth year, FFD expanded by including Otsego County farms, nearly doubling farm participation and increasing farm visitation. Although not fully assessed, best guesstimates are that 3,000 to 4,000 people eagerly roamed the region for farm visits. The FFD Planning Committee raised $18K from sponsors from both counties, signed on 39 farms, four farmers’ markets, and distributed twenty thousand farm guides around the region. Schoharie County and Otsego County tourism and social media also played significant roles in event publicity. Overall, despite the heat, the day went smoothly. Planning for 2017 begins in October that may include Delaware County as the third partner in what has become a major agri-tourism venture.

Mohawk Valley Food Hub Study – The report is complete, following a Food Systems Assessment with New Venture Advisors and a core team of CCE educators, Empire State Development, a local civil engineer consultant, and a food systems consultant. The study concludes with recommendations for closer examination of three opportunities for region based information gathered and the changing dynamics of New York State agriculture. The study has served to inform county efforts to revise respective county Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plans that are focusing on regional agriculture economic development.

In summary, the study’s focus was on three agricultural enterprise models: 1) Traditional Food Hub Facility - aggregation, sales, distribution; 2) Grain Mill and Storage Facility - post-harvest handling of all grains for malting, milling, and/or feed; and 3) Meat Processing Facility - sausage making, smoking, special cuts, etc. (slaughterhouse not applicable in this case).

To that end, CCE participated in a collaborative application for funding to initiate a Regional Clearinghouse for Small Grains. The primary purpose was to establish a virtual hub to determine the growing demand for New York State specialty grains and facilitate an emerging supply among New York producers. Although denied by the USDA-LFPP (Local Food Promotion Program), that effort will continue. Likewise for food aggregation and distribution, calls to develop new direct and wholesale markets, including Farm To School/Farm to Institution,
is in the forefront for 2017. Some vegetable producers in particular are experiencing a decline in direct market sales and fewer seasonal CSA subscriptions due likely to increased competition from new farmers, current farms wanting to diversify, and food markets carrying local products among others - a challenging issue with a growing local food system.

Farm to School: Through the New York State Dept. of Ag & Markets, CCE was awarded grant funding for the Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project. Lead by CCE Educator, Regina Tillman, the goal is to increase the number of specialty crop producers who sell to area schools and increase the schools’ rates of procurement from local producers. Additionally, there will be training of food service management and supervisory staff to increase skill levels for adding to the menu and serving fresh local produce. Targeted populations are all or a portion of Schoharie, Albany, Delaware, Otsego, Schenectady, and Montgomery Counties. Additional information follows this report section.

Now in its second year, the Central NY Beef Producers, facilitated by CCE Educator, Bill Gibson, renewed its collaborative marketing scheme that aggregated feeder-calves from six small producers for a live Tele-Auction on October 14 at CCE in Cooperstown. The auction follows a production and medical protocol as agreed by producers, and is closely guided by Cornell Beef Specialist, Mike Baker, along with USDA regional beef marketing leaders. The long-term goal is to develop a reputable pool of producers whose collaborative participation in the Beef Quality Assurance program will provide consistent, high-quality beef calves at the annual autumn auctions, bringing premium pricing for their efforts. The growing producer interest in market pooling and other livestock consumer demand demonstrates the need for a F/T livestock educator to serve on a regional team.

Additional educational activities by Bill included: the Leatherstocking Beekeepers to update on risk management tools; meetings with ‘natural buyers’ of beef for opportunities to market local producers; programs on bull selection and artificial insemination/heat synchronization in spring and fall; hosting on-farm pasture nutrition program; and facilitating multiple meetings and conference calls re: the Feeder Calf Pool. Bill also produced the quarterly the 12-page County Farm News. We are always grateful for the valuable input from Harvest NY’s new Livestock Processing and Marketing Specialist, MacKenzie Waro, who directs her broad regional responsibilities out of the Education Center in Cooperstown.

Schoharie and Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) soon will be welcoming a dozen new volunteers to begin their MGV apprenticeship following completion of the 2016 MGV Training in November. Meanwhile, sustainable gardening and landscape themes continue to highlight educational efforts. Otsego MGV’s collaborated with the Otsego County Conservation Association’s Earth Festival to produce another spectacular Spring Garden Day at the Milford Central School, followed by a very successful plant sale in the spring, and their fourth annual Harvest Luncheon and Silent Auction on September 24 at the Otesaga. The featured guest speaker was John Bower, currently the Marketing Manager at Hyde Hall in Springfield, who presented “The English Garden through the Years,” a historical overview of English garden design.

Of particular note is the Grow Initiative (Goal-Oriented Rural Outreach Work), a program offering small grants to MGVs and community partners who collaborate to incorporate CCE’s Garden-Based Learning methodology to a variety of projects throughout the county.
Three examples are the Laurens Public Library Herb Garden with Mary Ellen Crawford; Raised Beds and Native Pollinators with Joan Rielly and Tina McGurin and the Friends of the Worcester Library; and the Resurrection and Recovery of the Worcester Life Garden with Joan, Tina, and St. Joseph’s Church and its public memorial garden.

Also notable was The Otsego MGV’s Blue Sky Committee presentation to the CCE Board of Directors that featured a schematic site plan proposal for improved demonstration gardens, access to irrigation, redefined parking, and a multi-use garden structure for outdoor programs and demonstrations.

Other Otsego MGV staples included a monthly presence at the Oneonta Farmers’ Market, Cooperstown Farmers’ Market, the MGV Helpline, and a bi-monthly newsletter.

Schoharie MGV’s capped their spring workshop series with yet another successful plant sale, again in collaboration with SUNY Cobleskill Dept. of Plant Science. Spring workshops to help local gardening enthusiasts prepare for the coming growing season included the popular Annual Seed Exchange, Pollinator Gardens, on which we depend so much, and a return to Vegetable Gardening 101, addressing the continuing interest in starting vegetable gardens.

MGV’s from both counties collaborated with CCE Columbia-Greene Counties (Agro-Forestry Program) to deliver Early Detection-Rapid Response workshops on behalf of the Catskill Regional Invasive Species Program (CRISP) out of New York State DEC.

The Dairy and Field Crops Team, composed of Kevin Ganoe, Team Leader Area Field Crops Specialist, and Dave Balbian, Area Dairy Specialist, covers six counties in Central New York. The Team addresses annual educational activities and new initiatives beginning with optimizing herd reproductive efficiency; spring forage quality monitoring; Dairy Day, optimizing cow comfort for tie stall and free stall facilities; winter dairy management and transition cows; Corn Day and no-till production, hay field improvement, harvest timing, hay and baleage making and storage; field crop pest management and pesticide application safety and equipment; and a new emphasis on malting barley management that addresses the emerging demand in New York State. Another important program is the Academy for Dairy Executives for dairy farm business management for younger and new managers; focus on low milk prices, market outlook, patterns in milk production growth, and trends in dairy food consumption.

The Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program (ENYHP) consists of thirteen vegetable and fruit specialists who cover all of eastern New York State, including Schoharie County. Educational program highlights throughout the year include: comprehensive orchard management; high-tunnel research trails and best management practices (tomatoes); new pesticide application technology, including special permit trainings for agricultural workers with limited English language reading skills; blueberry pruning and value-added processing; and Viticulture and Enology research and application; and invasive species research and management to name a few.

Also prominent in the ENYHP schedule are the Empire State Producers Expo, the statewide production and marketing educational event for multiple commodities; the first ever NENY & VT Winter Grape School; and the annual Winter Vegetable School drawing producers from the Hudson Valley, the Capital Region, and Champlain Valley. Topics are including pumpkin and root crop variety trial results, fruit variety resistance management, Worker Protection Standards, the Food Safety Modernization Act Update, and Edamame (edible soybean).
The National Farm to School Network defines ‘farm to school’ as a program that enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food, and with local food producers. This occurs by changing food purchasing and educational practices at schools and in other educational settings. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as opportunities for experiential education such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips. Farm to School programs empower children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to the vibrancy of communities. The core focus of the programs are referred to as the Farm to School three ‘C’s: Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community.

Last year, as a continuation of the farm to school community work performed in the region as a volunteer since 2011, Regina Tillman applied for a grant through the New York State Department of Ag and Markets. This was the first round of grant offerings by New York State in support of the Farm to School concept. The grant was awarded as of January 2016, to be administered under the auspices of this Extension office, and continues through December 2017. Thus, for the Schoharie County program, which was first established in 2007 under Ms. Tillman’s guidance, she was reappointed as of May 16. Her re-entry into Cornell Cooperative Extension as a staff member fulfilled the first of two major program objectives of the New York State grant: the hiring of a Farm to School Coordinator for the project in order to provide oversight of the program as a whole, inclusive of fundraising, grant writing, publicity, advocacy, the expansion of activities and opportunities, and to serve as a community resource for the implementation of a farm to school concept in area schools.

The next major grant objective is to develop training opportunities for the food service management and staff that would enable them to work more effectively with and through the school food procurement process. This training would allow them to more easily obtain local specialty crops and to prepare them routinely for the school children within the region. To accomplish this, the farm to school program could look towards connecting with new or additional consultants and partners, and strengthening others. Enhanced school food service access to a greater volume of locally grown specialty crops is supported by a recent new partner, American Farmland Trust of New York State, which has developed a workshop for this purpose. The workshop is designed to allow local farmers to become more knowledgeable of the factors they need to address for selling to schools so that they may be prepared to meet the heightened demand. Meet-ups between area schools along with other buyers, and with local specialty crop producers, will be an integral part of the training established for both segments beginning spring of 2017.

In conjunction with these activities, education and communication strategies will continue to be deployed. This effort to develop a greater appreciation of local produce by students, their parents, and the teachers of participating schools, in light of all that it offers to the wellbeing of the community at large. In addition, all efforts applied under the New York State Farm to School Grant program are to meet the tangible goals which New York State Farm to School has identified as:

1. To increase total pounds of local specialty crops procured by school districts for school meal programs
2. To increase variety of local specialty crops procured by schools districts for school meal programs
3. To increase number of New York State producers and aggregators that are selling specialty crops to participating schools
4. To increase student knowledge of and preference for locally produced specialty crops
5. To increase number of new partnerships that help strengthen farm to school
Family and Consumer Sciences Program Schoharie and Otsego Counties reported by Don Smyers, Executive Director

Nutrition Program Educators: Michelle Leveski and Connie Bennett

The primary Family and Consumer Sciences program offered by local staff was through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The program focuses on limited-resource families with young children.

In October 2015, a second EFNEP Educator was hired. The program serves residents in Schoharie, Otsego, and Montgomery Counties.

2016 Financial Support for 10/01/2015 - 9/30/2016

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